

CHINA BEACH TO BAY

SPECIES: PYGMY NUTHATCH



ROUTE HIGHLIGHTS

- » Neighborhoods: Chinatown, Nob Hill, Pacific Heights, Presidio Heights, Seacliff
- » Parks and Open Spaces: Alta Vista Park & Lafayette Park, The Presidio, Lands End, Baker Beach, China Beach



Credit: Judd Patterson

PYGMY NUTHATCH – *Sitta pygmaea*

Let's play Hide and Seek!

Pygmy Nuthatches are a small bird with a sharp beak, which they use to feast on seeds and insects found in trees. They often hide seeds in tree bark for a snack later in the day or breakfast the next morning. Pygmy Nuthatches are also known for being little gymnasts, because they can walk down trees! These little birds survive cold winter nights by roosting with 50 to 100 or more other Pygmy Nuthatches in tree cavities, and offspring from previous years help their parents raise young. A group of nuthatches are collectively known as a "jar" of nuthatches.

RESIDENT OR MIGRATORY

Resident

KEY HABITAT FEATURES

Found in forests, especially mature stands of conifers.

DIET

Feeds on insects, spiders, and pine seeds, catches it seeds.

ASSOCIATED PLANTS & ANIMALS

Bishop Pine – *Pinus muricata*

Douglas Fir – *Pseudotsuga menziesii*

Sequoia sempervirens – Redwood

Shore Pine – *Pinus contorta* var. *contorta*

NESTING INFORMATION

Nests in cavities in snags or stumps and breeds from mid-April to mid-August.

ADDITIONAL HABITAT PLANTS

Provide exotic trees like some of the lower growing pines to bring the birds down to viewing level *Sitka Spruce* – *Picea sitchensis*, *White Fir* – *Abies concolor*. Pines that could work include but not limited to: *P. patula*, *P. oocarpa*, *P. monophylla*, *P. juarezensis*, *P. X quadrifolia* (pinyon pines), *P. contorta* ssp. *contorta*, *P. coulteri* (fairly large in habitat but slow in SF), *P. attenuata* & *P. muricata* (closest relatives to Monterey pine, *P. radiata* and vulnerable to pine-pitch canker).

Among the Douglas-firs, the low branching in youth poses a problem. There are two species in California: *Pseudotsuga menziesii* & *P. macrocarpa*, both proven successful in SF. In Asia are two species that might also work, a few occasionally available in the trade: *Pseudotsuga japonica* (Japan), with a flat crown, *P. sinensis* – with many varieties that are sometimes given species status: *P. sinensis* var. *brevifolia* (Guangxi & Guizhou, China), *P. s. var. forrestii* (Yunnan), *P. s. var. gaussonii* (Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Fujian), *P. s. var. sinensis* (Yunnan, Shaanxi, Hubei), *P. s. var. wilsoniana* (Taiwan).